



Foundational Public Health Services

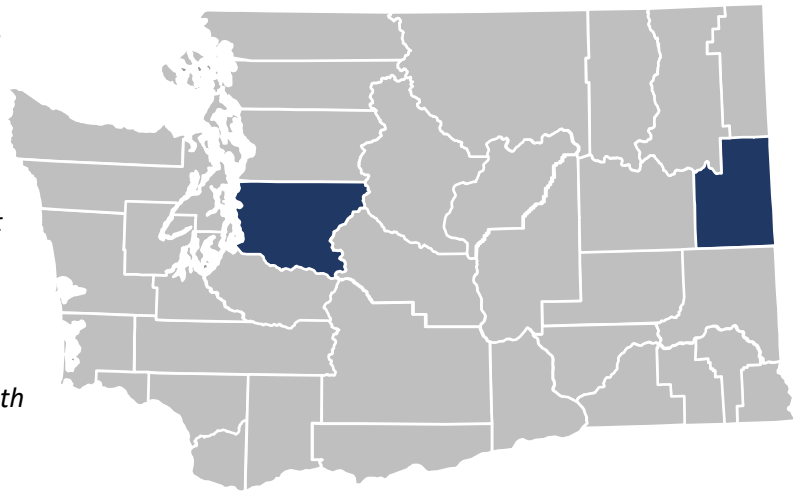
Healthy. Vital. **Everyone.** Everywhere.

Protecting Communities from Disease

Protecting Washington communities from the threats of communicable disease such as tuberculosis (TB) is one of our state's Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS).

*The **Washington State TB Collaborative Network (WTCN)** is a support system of TB programs from local health jurisdictions and the state Department of Health (DOH). WTCN staff are housed at Public Health Seattle-King County (King County), but collaborate with TB programs statewide.*

Any local health jurisdiction needing assistance with TB-related issues may contact WTCN. The team triages requests and provides support, or finds the DOH or local health TB program that has the particular tools, expertise or resources needed.



Public health agencies often work together to protect their communities from disease. Here's one story about a collaboration between Spokane and King Counties.

Sharing services to fight TB

The Spokane Regional Health District (Spokane) contacted WTCN earlier this year. Their region was experiencing an increase in TB cases, including the TB-related death of a young woman and several suspected cases of TB among her close contacts. Also, the woman had regularly attended a church where as many as 75 additional people may have been exposed to TB, and there were more people to check on in her other social circles.

This meant a large contact investigation, and there was no time to lose. Spokane staff coordinated with WTCN to help mobilize resources. The Spokane team worked side-by-side with public health system partners—including 16 King County, 2 DOH and 1 Adams County staff. Through this group effort, they were able to quickly screen 138 people for TB.

The screenings identified 5 people with active TB, and around 25 more with a latent TB infection (people who have been infected but who don't have active TB). All are receiving the appropriate treatment.

Shared services, such as WTCN, benefit the entire state. While the King County-based WTCN helped Spokane, Spokane continued to lead a shared services project with health departments in five neighboring counties.

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FPHS—Shared services pilot projects

In 2017-2018, part of the initial FPHS funds were used to support three shared services pilot projects for local health jurisdictions.

It's difficult to maintain the level of resources and expertise needed for every public health issue at every public health agency across the state. Ongoing budget cuts have made it necessary for Washington's public health system to cut staff or lab services needed for outbreak response.

Shared services provide some help to local health departments.

Along with the tuberculosis prevention and control project led by Public Health Seattle-King County—and outlined in this story—projects included:

Leader: Spokane Regional Health District.

- Epidemiology and community health assessment expertise to multiple local health jurisdictions in Eastern Washington.

Leader: Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

- Expertise and technical assistance to multiple local health jurisdictions in making timely information available to health care providers in their communities.

TB is just one example

TB is a disease caused by bacteria that is spread from person-to-person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs but may also affect other parts of the body such as the brain, kidneys, lymph nodes, joints or spine. Treatment may take 6-12 months, or longer in cases of multiple drug resistant TB. Costs for treating active TB range from \$17,000 to \$150,000, the higher amount being required to treat multiple drug resistant TB.

In 2017, there were 207 cases of TB reported in Washington State. Our public health system is responsible for stopping the spread of infectious TB and identifying those exposed to TB. Isolation of a patient and contact investigations are tools used to limit the spread of TB.

The expertise—and resources—needed for these investigations doesn't exist in every community statewide. Even larger counties that have the expertise—such as Spokane—may not always have the resources to quickly find, contact and test large numbers of people while still continuing all of the other critical public health services people in their communities rely on each day.

The FPHS shared services pilot project on TB is one example of how public health is working on new service delivery models to protect the health of all communities in our state.

FPHS Partners

The Governmental Public Health System

